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THE HANDS OF SHANG-CHI.

MASTER OF KUNG FU



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GENE
DAY



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"INDEED, THE CHANGE IN MYSELF IS INSPIRED BY THE CHANGING TERRAIN..."

"CHANGE, THEN, LEADS TO CHANGE."

DOUG MOENCH
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GENE DAY
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"EH--? WHAT IS THIS?
ANOTHER CHANGE--AS THE
RICH, RIPE LIFE OF THE
JUNGLE YIELDS TO A BROWN
PLACE OF DECAY AND RUINS."



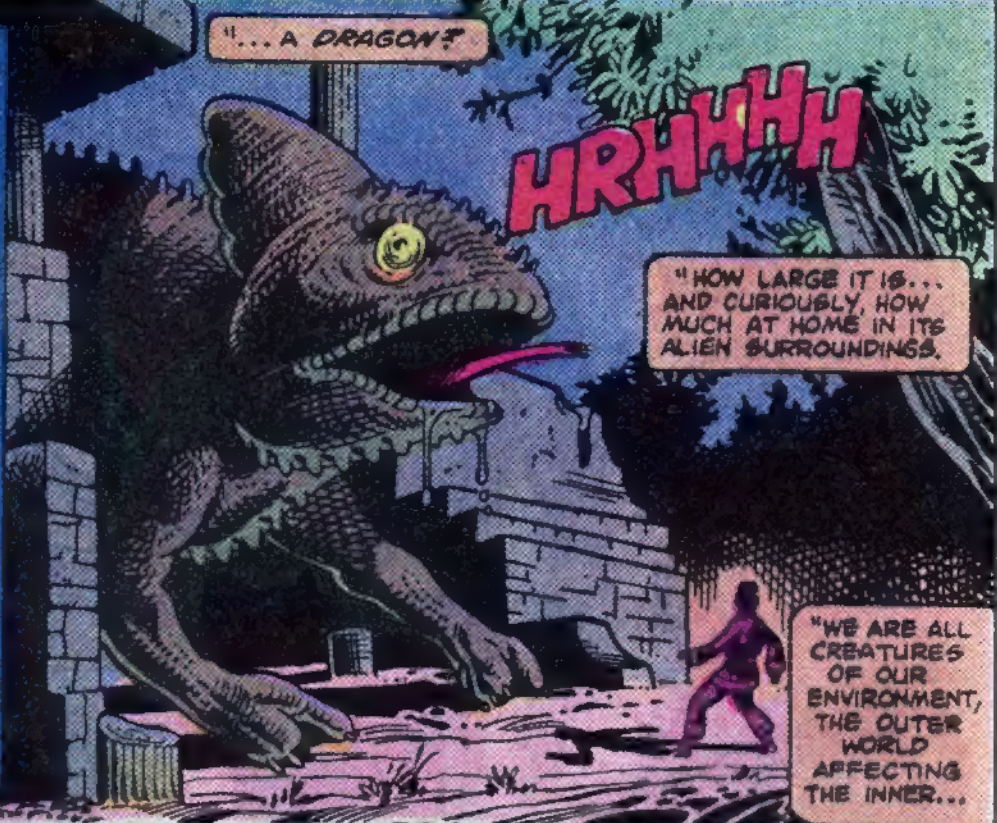
"AGAIN THERE IS A
CORRESPONDING CHANGE
IN MY THOUGHTS AND
FEELINGS; MY MOOD
GROWS DARKER NOW..."

"WAIT--FROM THE
BLACKNESS OF THE
ENTRANCE..."



HSSSSSS

"...A DRAGON?"



HRHHHH

"HOW LARGE IT IS...
AND CURIOUSLY, HOW
MUCH AT HOME IN ITS
ALIEN SURROUNDINGS."

"WE ARE ALL
CREATURES
OF OUR
ENVIRONMENT,
THE OUTER
WORLD
AFFECTING
THE INNER..."

"YES--SEE! THE MONSTER ALSO
BEGINS TO CHANGE, ITS BROWN
HIDE SHIFTING TOWARD GREEN..."



"...AS IT ADJUSTS
FROM DARKNESS
TO LIGHT..."

"...BLENDING FROM THE SHADOWS
OF ITS ANCIENT LAIR TO THE
BRIGHT COLOR OF THE SURROUND-
ING JUNGLE."



"WILL ITS ATTITUDE, LIKE MINE,
ALSO CHANGE? IF SO, FROM PON-
DEROUS DROWSINESS... TO WHAT?"



HRHHHH



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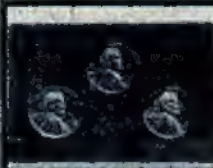
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LEIKO WU-- IT IS TIME TO LEAVE?

YES, SIR DENIS IS EXPECTING US AT HIS TOWNHOUSE.

WHERE IS THE TOWNHOUSE, MISS WU?

IN THE MAYFAIR SECTION.

GOOD--PERHAPS HE HAS SETTLED ON A NEW IDENTITY FOR ME. THE "DARK ANGEL" IS FINE FOR FIELD WORK, BUT I SHOULD PREFER SOMETHING A LITTLE BRIGHTER AND MORE CIVILIZED FOR DAILY CONGRESS.

MAYFAIR--A LOVELY NAME. HOMESICK I MAY BE, BUT I MUST ADMIT YOUR CITY OF LONDON IS NOT WITHOUT CHARM.

AND HOW IS OUR DEFECTOR BEHAVING HERSELF, SHANG?

FINE.

ENJOYING THE BODYGUARD WORK, ARE YOU?

YES.

AH WELL, GUESS I CAN'T BLAME YOU...

WERE I A MAN GUARDING THAT BODY WOULD HARDLY HURT. JUST DON'T ENDANGER THE GOODS YOURSELF, HEART?

"SMITH'S MAYFAIR TOWNHOUSE: PERHAPS DARK ANGEL WAS RIGHT WE ALL BECOME DIFFERENT PERSONS FOR DIFFERENT PEOPLE--SIR DENIS NAYLAND SMITH IS A DIFFERENT MAN IN THE COMPANY OF BLACK JACK TARR, AS THEY REMINISCE A PAST OF SHARED DANGER AND GLORY..."

REMEMBER THE TIME ON THE DOCKS IN HONG KONG, BLACK JACK, WHEN--

WHEN THE SMUGGLERS WERE TRYING TO HOIST SOME CRATES ONTO THEIR BOAT AND THE WINCH BROKE--

AND THREE COURTESANS SPILLED OUT OF THE BROKEN CRATE IN THEIR BIRTH-DAY SUITS...

YEAH--BE BLOODY HARD TO FORGET THAT ONE, SIR DENIS.

"BUT CLIVE RESTON IS HIS USUAL SELF--QUIET...AND APART FROM ALL OTHERS IN HIS BROODING..."



WH--? THIS IS THE DEFECTOR
--THE DARK ANGEL?

YES...AND TO WHOM
HAVE I THE PLEASURE...?



CLIVE RESTON,
AT YOUR HUM-
BLE SERVICE.

"...AND YET ABLE TO CHANGE
SWIFTLY, IT SEEMS ACCORD-
ING TO THE STIMULATION OF
HIS ENVIRONMENT.



I SEE MELISSA IS
STILL STUCK AT THE
CASTLE IN SCOTLAND,
CLIVE...



AH...WELL! NOW THAT
EVERYONE'S HERE, SHALL
WE GET ON WITH IT?

FIRST
ORDER
OF BUS-
INESS...



IT IS MY DISTINCT
PRIVILEGE, MADAM, TO
BESTOW UPON YOU YOUR
NEW IDENTITY.

THANK YOU,
SIR DENIS.



"MIA
LESSING...?"



YOU'LL GROW ACCUS-
TOMED TO IT, I'M
SURE.



YES, I RATHER LIKE
IT ALREADY. IT'S SO
...BRITISH.



QUITE.

NEXT ORDER OF
BUSINESS--YOUR
DEBRIEFING
BY MI-6.



THEY TELL ME YOU'VE
REVEALED A NUMBER
OF SPY CELLS HERE
WITHIN BRITAIN, ONE OF
WHICH REQUIRES IM-
MEDIATE ATTENTION--

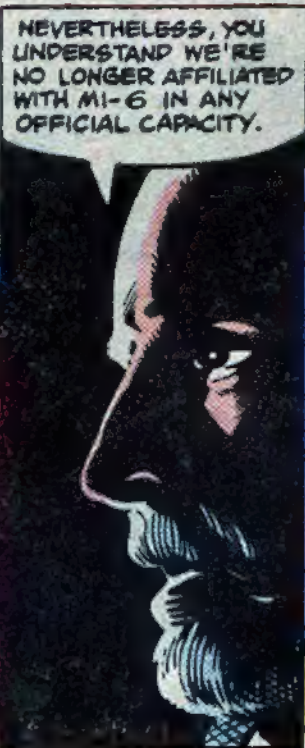


--BUT THAT YOU'D
PREFER CRACKING IT
WITH "FREELANCE
RESTORATIONS."

WITH
US.



WITH SHANG-
CHI. I SAW HIM
IN ACTION IN
ROME.



NEVERTHELESS, YOU
UNDERSTAND WE'RE
NO LONGER AFFILIATED
WITH MI-6 IN ANY
OFFICIAL CAPACITY.

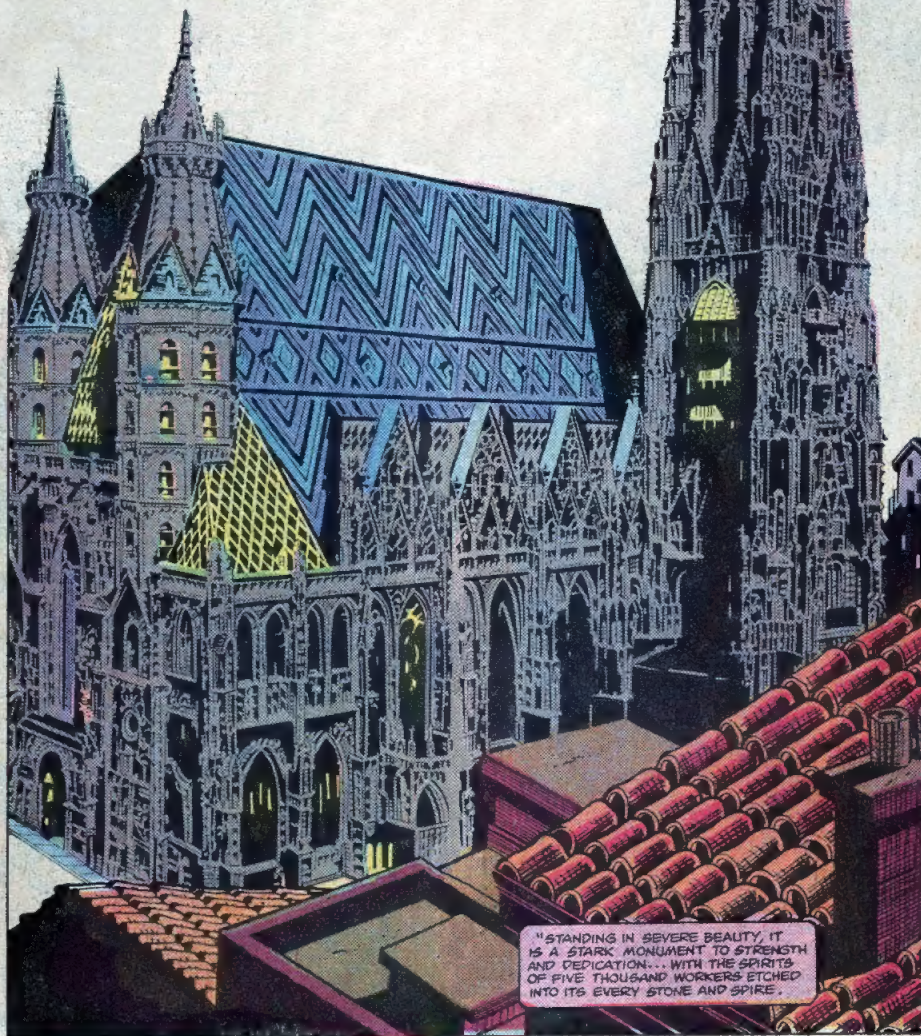
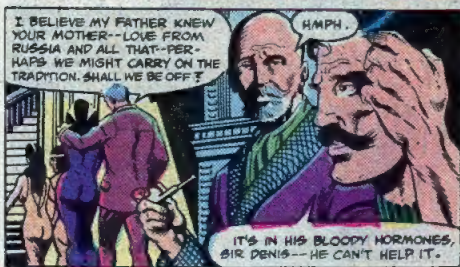


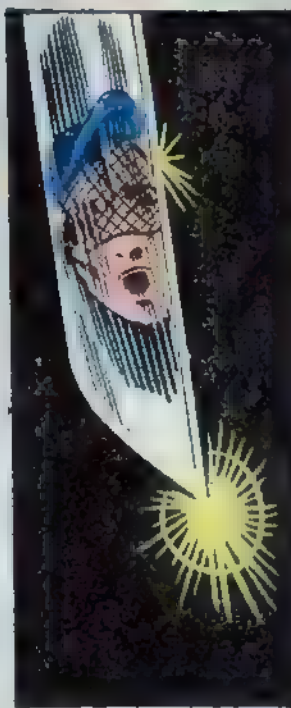
PERHAPS THAT'S
WHY I PREFER
YOU.



NOW--I PROPOSE ELIMINATING THE MOLE CELL AT ONCE, BEFORE IT SPREADS LIKE CANCER AND DEVOURS YOUR ENTIRE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY FROM WITHIN.

"THE CATHEDRAL IS AWESOME. IT REACHES FOR THE HEAVENS WITH THE FAITH AND HOPE OF THOSE WHO FEAR THE UNKNOWN AND FEEL, WITH EACH PASSING DAY, THE SHADOW OF DEATH GROWING LONGER ACROSS THEIR SOULS."

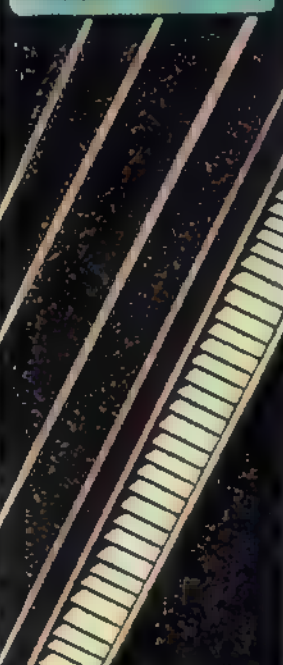




"AND AS DARK ANGEL IS DRAGGED FROM SIGHT--



--RESTON BURSTS FROM THE CONFESSION BOOTH...



COVER'S BLOWN, CHI! ANGEL'S BEEN TAKEN! GET THE ONES ON THE ALTAR!



"LIKE A LIZARD SHEDDING ITS SKIN, I LEAVE THE BOTTLE, HAT, OVERCOAT, AND TWITCH BEHIND.

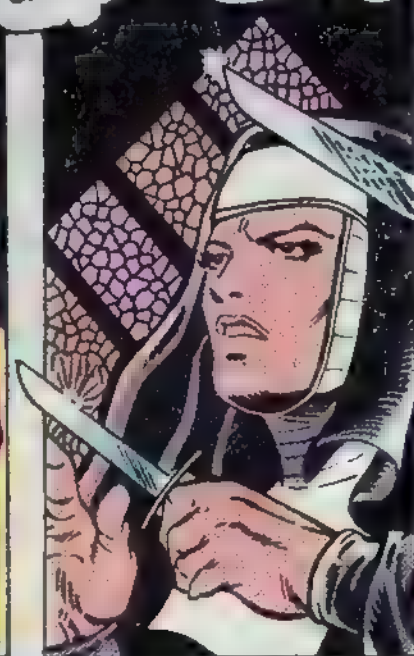


"THE DEMANDS OF SOBRIETY AND SPEED LIE AHEAD.

GOT TO GET OUTSIDE BEFORE THAT PHONY PRIEST TAKES DARK ANGEL OUT OF--



TERRIFIC--PHONY NUNS AS WELL!

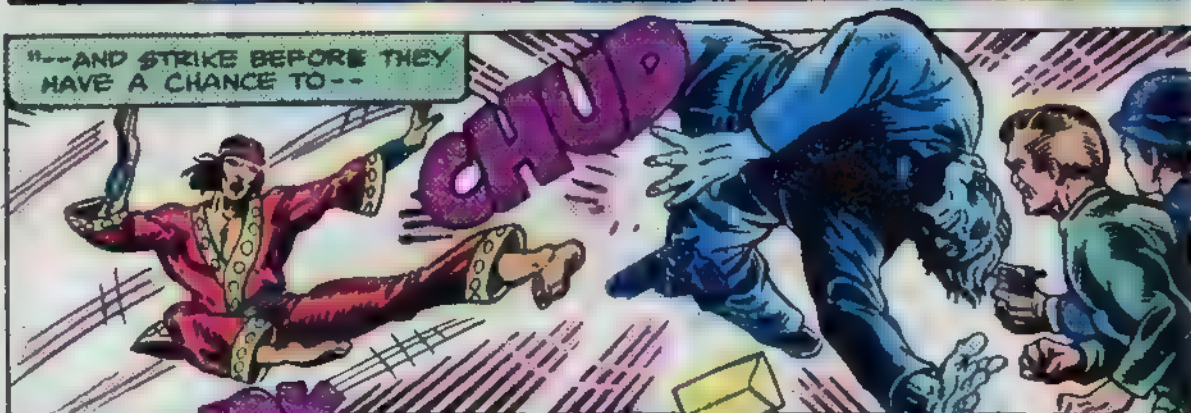


"THE FALSE WORSHIPPERS AT THE ALTAR SPIN COLD METAL IN THEIR HANDS.

"I MUST INCREASE MY SPEED --



--AND STRIKE BEFORE THEY HAVE A CHANCE TO--



--FIRE.



"MARKHAM AND ONE OF HIS CONTACTS SEE NOTHING BUT DARKNESS--BUT WHAT OF THE THIRD?

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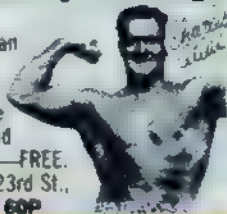
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"WHERE IS--"

PLASH

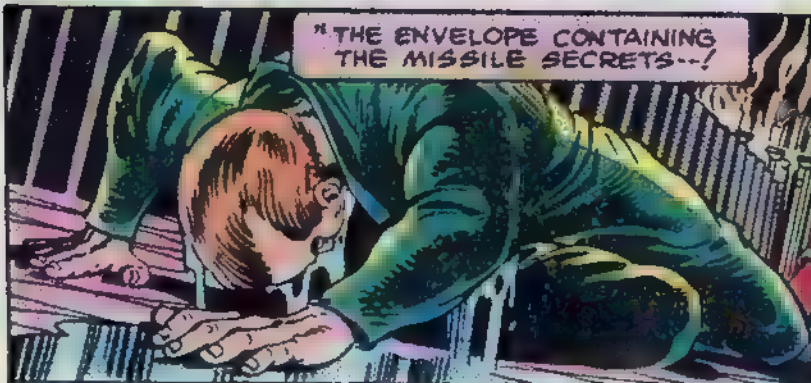


BOOM

LISTEN UP, PENGUINS,
AND LISTEN UP GOOD!

FRAKT

I DIDN'T FIND
MYSELF A SWEET
ANGEL JUST TO
LOSE HER THIS
QUICK!



"THE ENVELOPE CONTAINING
THE MISSILE SECRETS--!"



COME ON, CHI--
WE'VE LOST ENOUGH
TIME AS IT IS!

SKOP



DARK ANGEL'S ALREADY
BEEN TAKEN OUTSIDE!



WE'VE GOT
TO REACH HER
BEFORE SHE
BURNS!



"LEIKO'S CAR SCREECHES TO A HALT IN FRONT OF THE CATHEDRAL EVEN AS WE EMERGE..."

THEY TOOK HER ONTO THAT BUS, HURRY-- GET IN!



"WE LEAP INTO THE CAR AND LEIKO JAMS HER FOOT TO THE FLOOR, QUICKLY OVERTAKING THE BUS..."



CHI! WHAT THE DEVIL ARE YOU TRYING TO--

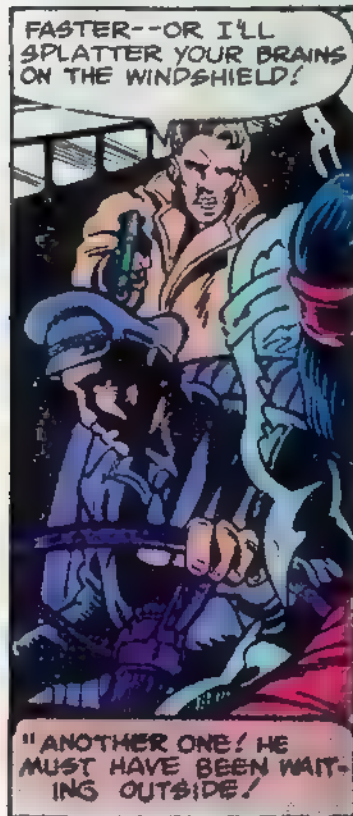


--DOT?



"I SEE THE FALSE PRIEST INSIDE, HOLDING DARK ANGEL..."

"...BUT THE BUS-- WHY DOES IT SUDDENLY INCREASE ITS SPEED?"



FASTER--OR I'LL SPLATTER YOUR BRAINS ON THE WINDSHIELD!



"AT LEAST DARK ANGEL IS UNHURT, ALTHOUGH HER OUTER SKIN OF MOURNING HAS BEEN SHREDED..."

THERE'S ONE CLINGING TO THE BUS, YOU FOOL!

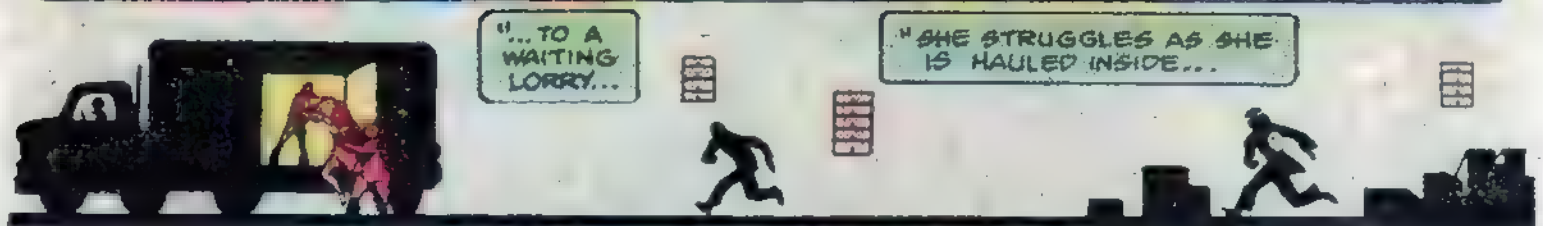
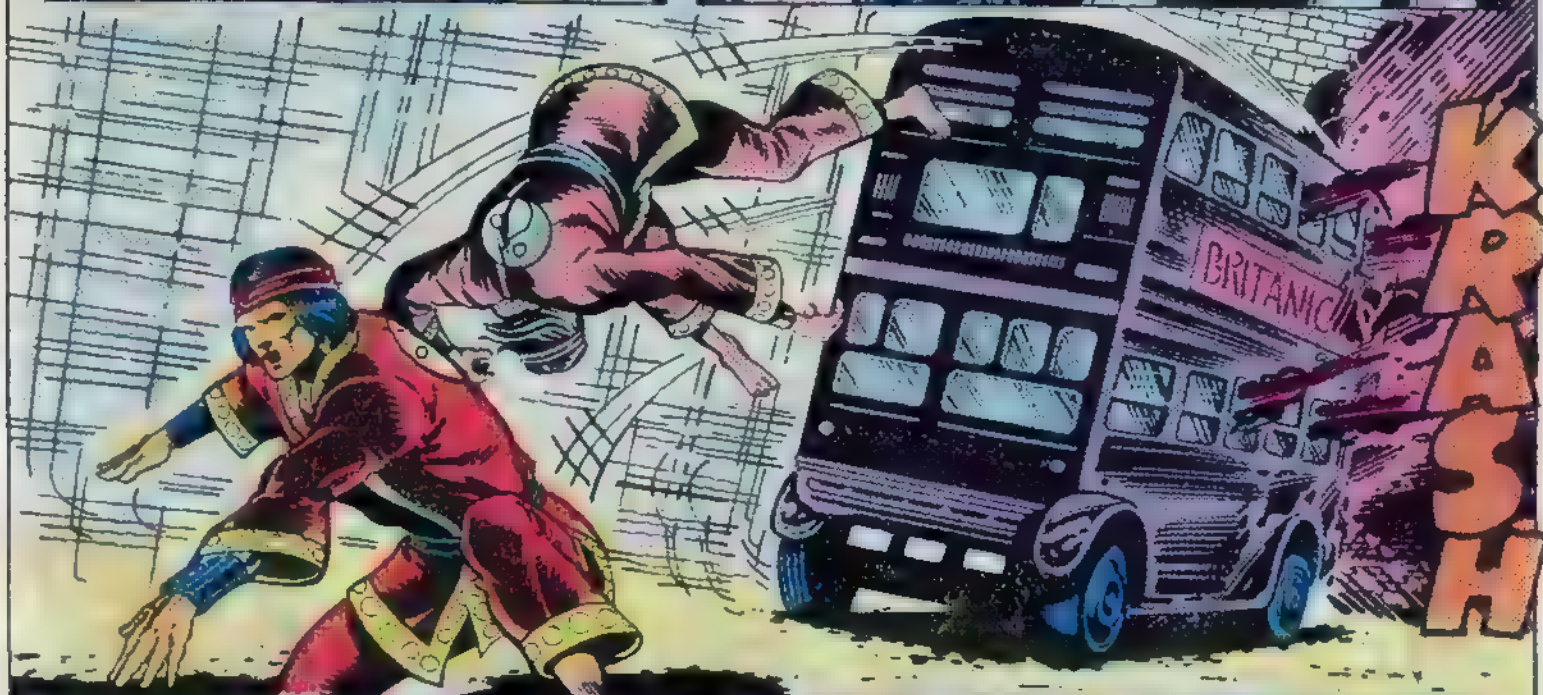
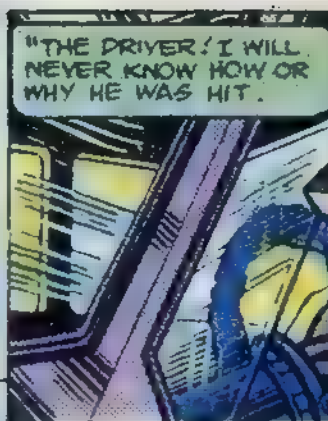
CAN'T YOU SEE HIM AT THE WINDOW?



YES... I SEE HIM.



"TWO SHOTS--BUT ONLY ONE WINDOW SHATTERED..."



"NIGHT: RESTON HAS ASSUMED THE GUARDING OF DARK ANGEL FREEING ME TO SLEEP HERE AT SMITH'S TOWNHOUSE..."

"AND YET, SLEEP IS ELUSIVE--"

"--DISTURBED BY SLIGHT SOUNDS FROM SMITH'S OFFICE."

"DARK ANGEL--/ BUT WHAT IS SHE DOING HERE? WHAT IS SHE LOOKING FOR--?"

"UNLESS IT IS--"

"WAIT SHE COMES THIS WAY!"

"I MUST HIDE..."

"YES... HERE IN THE FOYER, AMONG THE STATUES, I MUST BE STILL AS STONE UNTIL SHE--"

"NO--SHE IS SIMPLY LEAVING..."

"...AND MY CAMOFLAGUE HAS THEREFORE SERVED ITS PURPOSE..."

THE MISSILE DOCUMENTS WERE BURNED IN THE CATHEDRAL, DARK ANGEL. YOU EVEN LIT ONE OF THE CANDLES YOURSELF--

--WHEN YOU WERE POSING AS A WIDOW IN BLACK."



"THE BLADES
FIND NOTHING
BUT THE
STONE FLESH
BEHIND
ME."

"BUT DARK ANGEL..."



"... SHE HAS ALREADY FOUND
THE ESCAPE OF A FAST CAR..."

"YET EVEN AS SHE
DISAPPEARS INTO THE
NIGHT, ANOTHER CAR
APPROACHES..."



"RESTON!"

CHI--? BAD
NEWS!

I DROWESE OFF, BLAST IT! AND ANGEL'S
GONE! WE'VE GOT TO FIND HER!

TO THE
AQUARIUM
PET SHOP,
RESTON--
FAST! WE
WILL FIND
HER THERE!



WHAT--? THEY TOOK HER
THERE? HOW DO YOU KNOW--?

BECAUSE SHE IS NOT A DEFECTOR, RESTON. NO ONE
TOOK HER ANYWHERE--NOT EVEN FROM THE CATHEDRAL.
IT WAS A STAGED KIDNAPPING--A SHAM.



SHE IS A PLANT
--POSING AS A
DEFECTOR SO SHE
CAN INFILTRATE
BRITISH
INTELLIGENCE.

SHE IS.

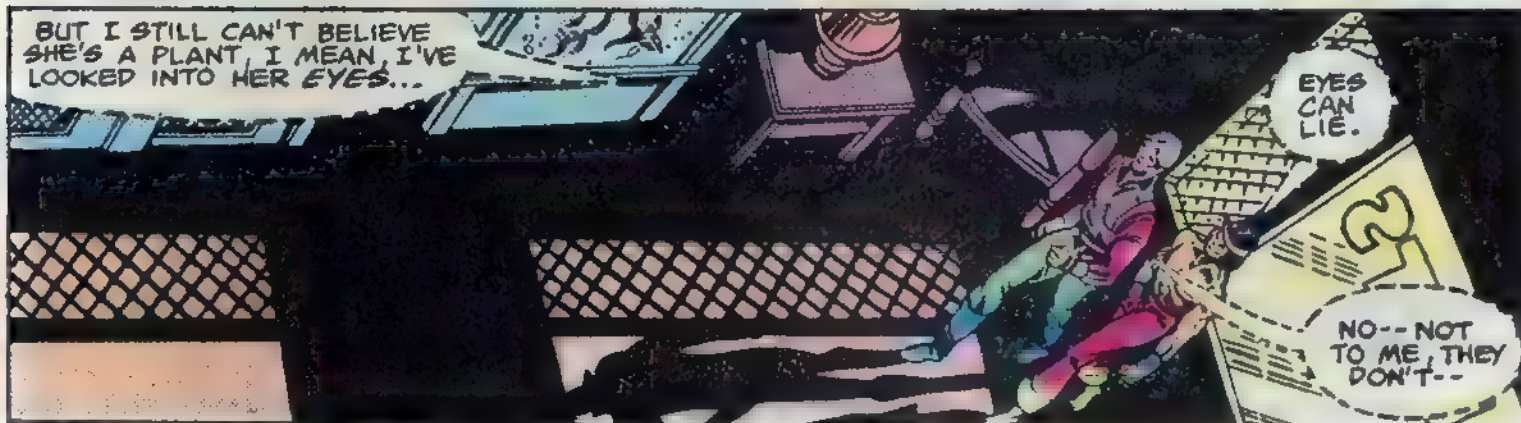
WHAT?/ BUT SHE
CAN'T BE--!



"WE REACH
THE PLACE
IN MINUTES..."

SHE INTENDED THIS PET SHOP
TO BE THE STAGE FOR ANOTHER
SHOW TOMORROW--EITHER
THAT OR A TRAP.

THEN WE'LL ENTER THE TRAP A NIGHT
EARLY--I JUST PICKED THE LOCK.



BUT I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE
SHE'S A PLANT, I MEAN, I'VE
LOOKED INTO HER EYES...

EYES
CAN
LIE.

NO-- NOT
TO ME, THEY
DON'T--

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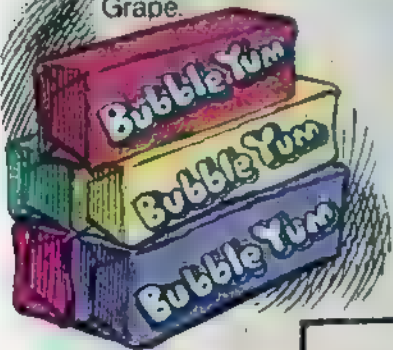


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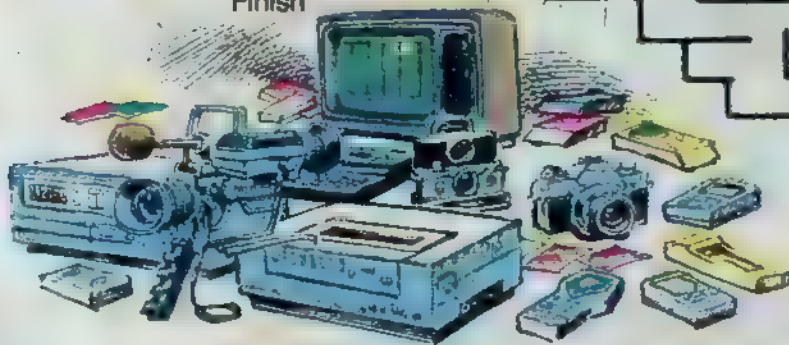
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GRANTED SHE *DID* CHANGE
AFTER THEY TRIED TO BUNDLE
HER OFF IN THAT LORRY-- SHE
SEEMED TO GET HARSHER...



...BUT I'D BE MAD TOO,
AND HER ANGER WAS DIRECTED
AT THEM, NOT--

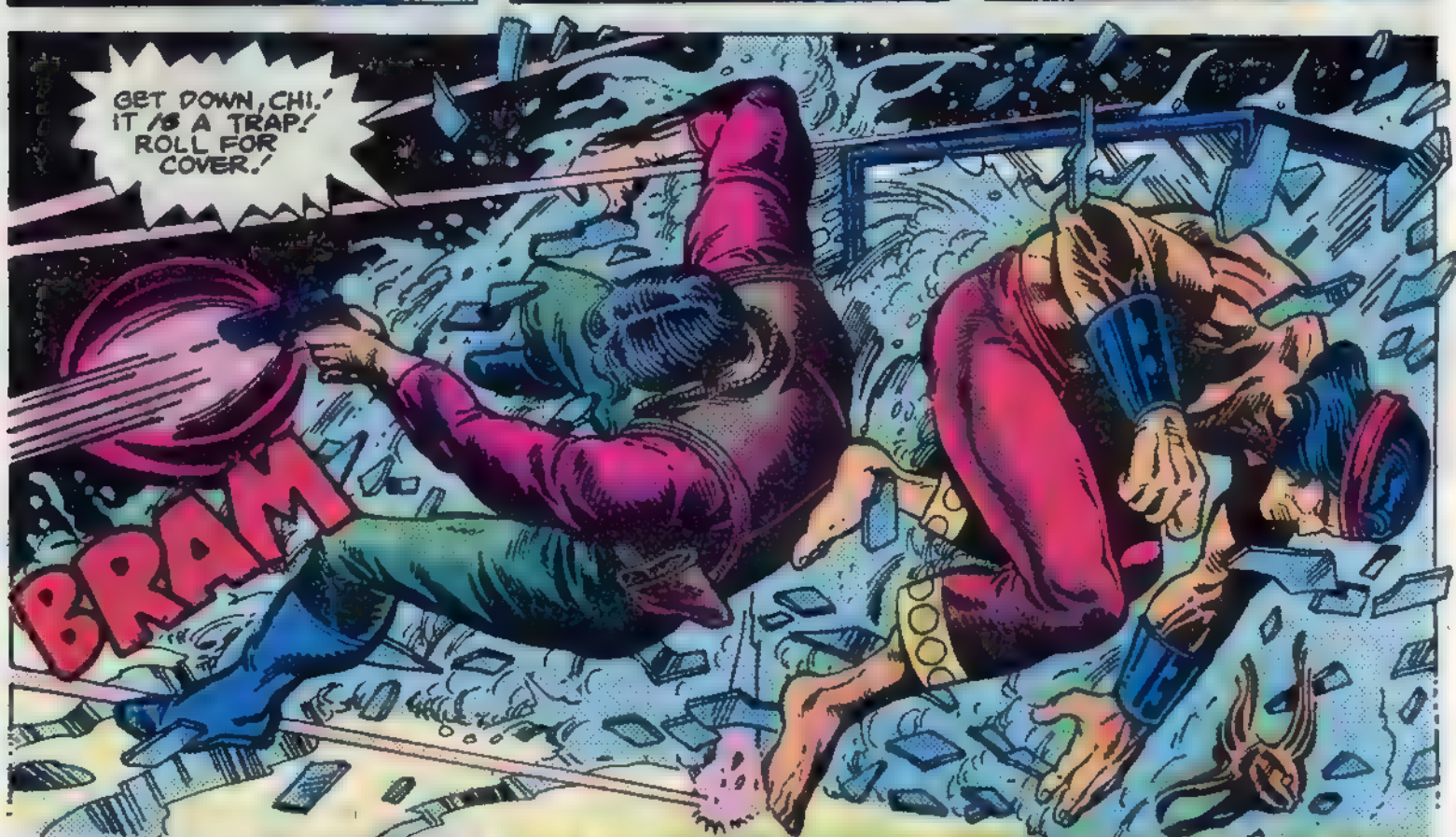


--US.

**BRAM
BRAM
BRAM**



GET DOWN, CHI!
IT IS A TRAP!
ROLL FOR
COVER!



CHI-- ARE YOU
ALL RIGHT?



CHI--!

WHERE
ARE
YOU?!

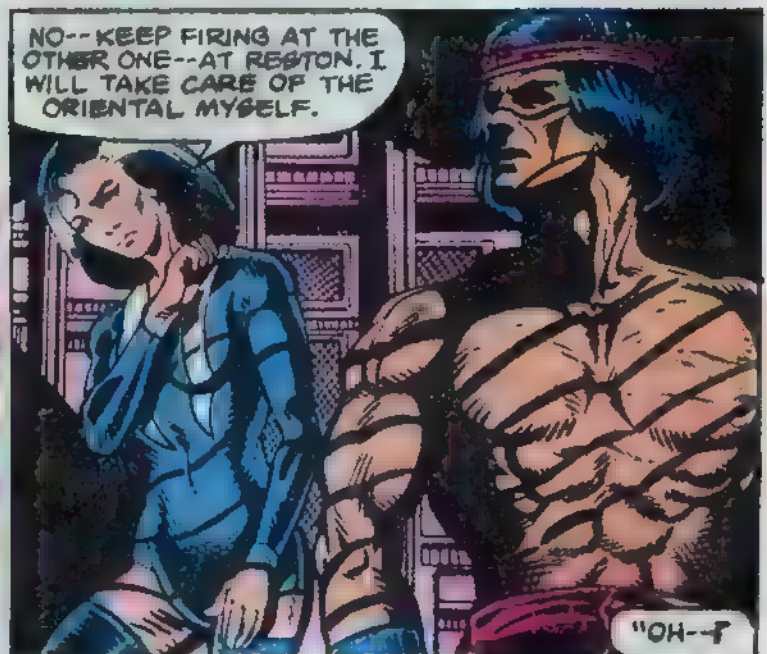
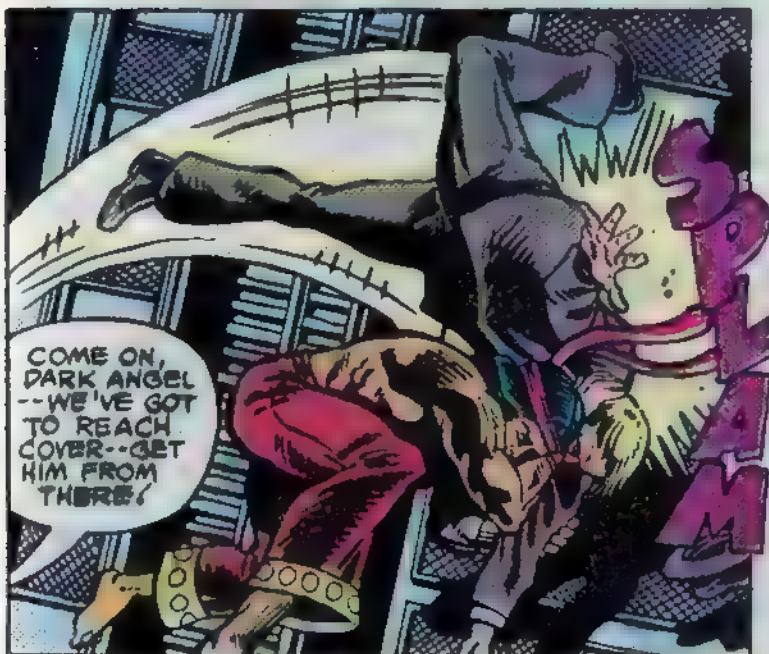




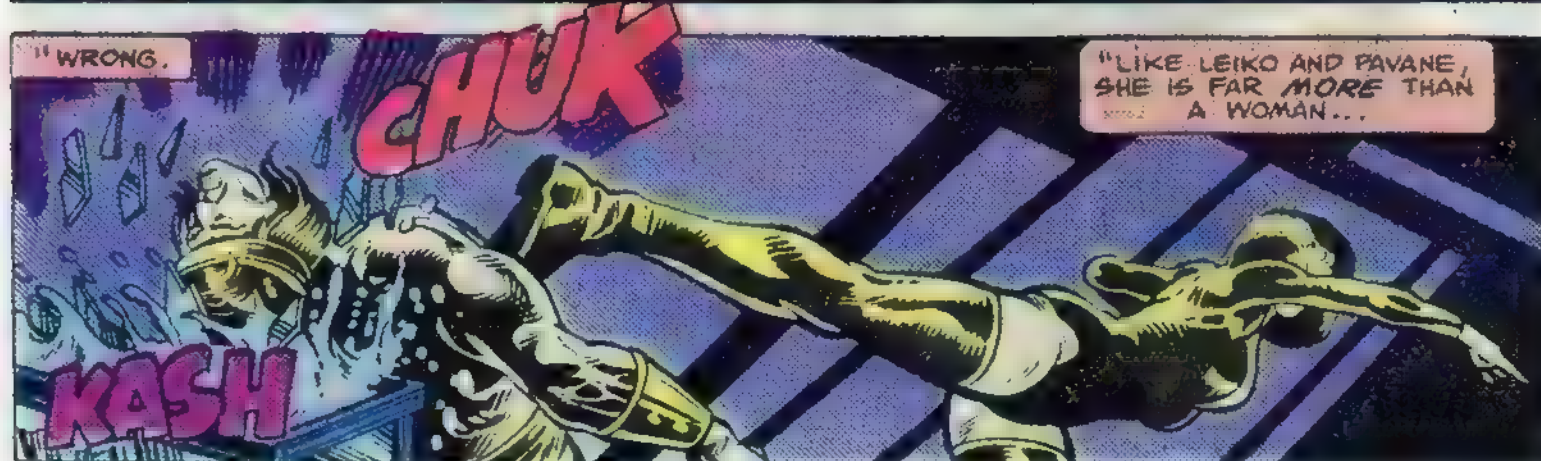
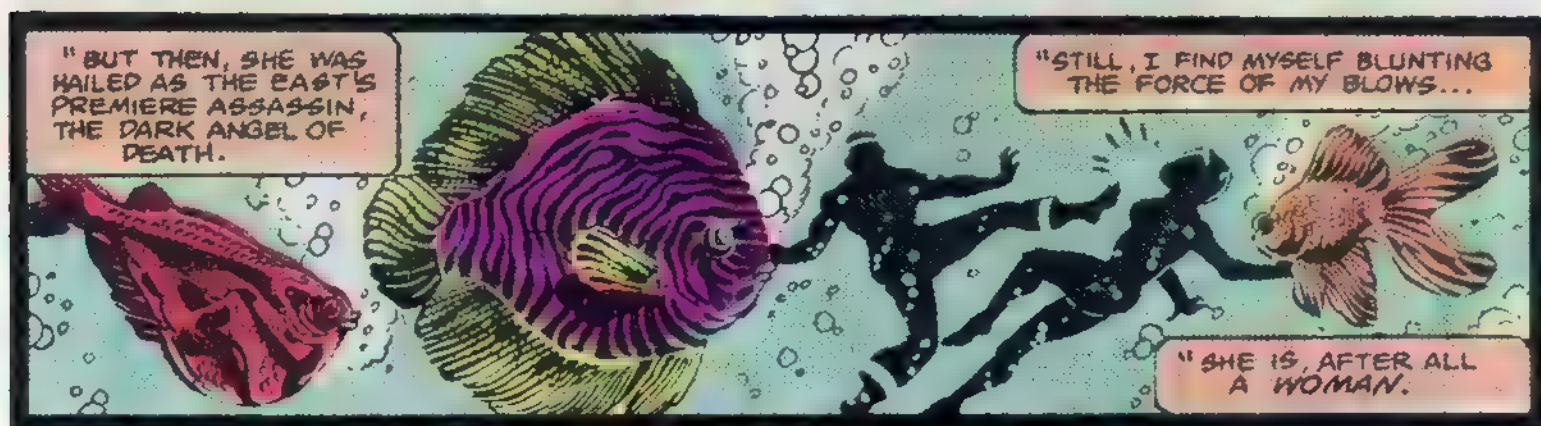
AH, IT SEEMS THE ORIENTAL HAS ALREADY BEEN HIT. KEEP FIRING UNTIL HIS COMPANION JOINS HIM.



"HER VOICE IS MORE THAN MERELY JUST HARSH--IT HAS CHANGED, AND IS NOW FILLED WITH THE VENOM OF CRUELTY."



"OH--T"



"SHE IS A DEADLY ASSASSIN..."

"THEN I MUST POSE
TOO-- LIKE A RIGID,
UNCARING STATUE..."

"... WHOSE STONE
FLESH SHOWS ONLY
DISDAIN FOR HER
WEAPONS."

HAA!!!

NOW, WOMAN...

... YOUR
WEAPONS ARE
SPENT...

... AND YOU
MUST FIGHT
ME LIKE A
MAN!

"I MUST PROLONG THE POSE
--PERMITTING HER TO STRIKE ME..."

VERY WELL, "MAN"
WILL THIS DO?

"I FALL BACK BEYOND THE POINT OF
IMPACT, ABSORBING ONLY ENOUGH OF THE
KICK TO MAKE IT BELIEVABLE..."

"NOW, WHILE HER
GUARD IS RELAXED--

SMWAKT

"AS SHE
BOASTED
TO
SMITH...

"...IT WAS EASY
TO PENETRATE.

THIS ONE'S FOR
YOU, POP!

SPLAP

HUH--?

BRAM

SO MUCH FOR THE
SMALL-FRY...

...BUT I STILL CAN'T BELIEVE THE
BIG FISH WAS DARK ANGEL. SHE
REALLY HAD ME FOOLED, CHI.

I WAS
CONVINCED
SHE--

THAT
TERRANIUM
JUST TOPPLED
OVER! WHO
THE--?

KRASH



"BUT IT DOES NOT SIGNAL A THREAT. RATHER IT IS--"



DARK ANGEL. ANOTHER ONE--?



THE REAL ONE, RESTON.

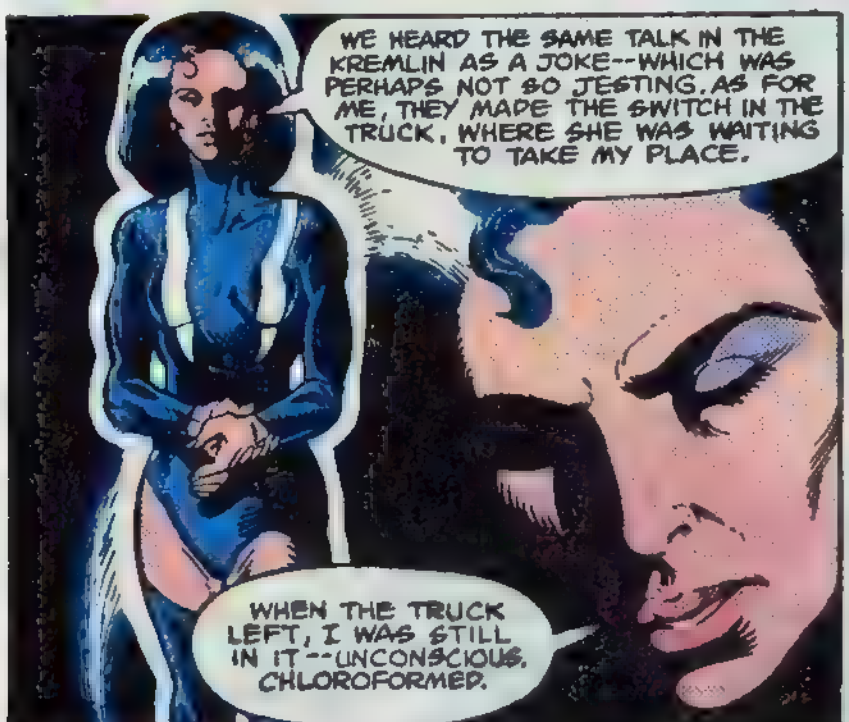
"YES...IT IS CLEAR NOW. SHE CHANGED TOO MUCH AT THE LORRY..."



THE OTHER IS A KGB DOUBLE, CLIVE, A WOMAN OF THE SAME HEIGHT AND BUILD--COSMETIC SURGERY AND HAIR DYE--THE RUSS TO DISGUISE HER VOICE WITH HOARSENESS...

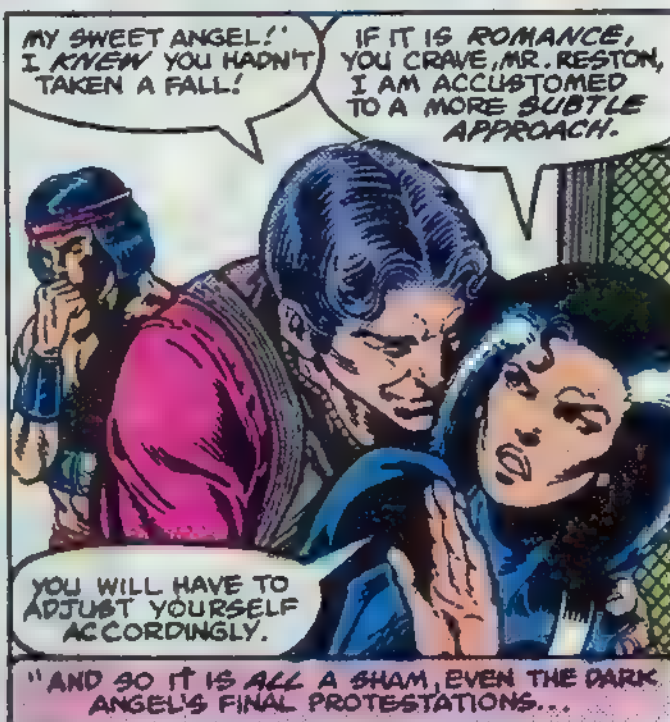


YES, THE RUSSIANS ARE BIG ON THAT, AREN'T THEY? THERE'S BEEN TALK OF LEE HARVEY OSWALD DOUBLES--AS MANY AS THREE OF THEM.



WE HEARD THE SAME TALK IN THE KREMLIN AS A JOKE--WHICH WAS PERHAPS NOT SO JESTING. AS FOR ME, THEY MADE THE SWITCH IN THE TRUCK, WHERE SHE WAS WAITING TO TAKE MY PLACE.

WHEN THE TRUCK LEFT, I WAS STILL IN IT--UNCONSCIOUS. CHLOROFORMED.

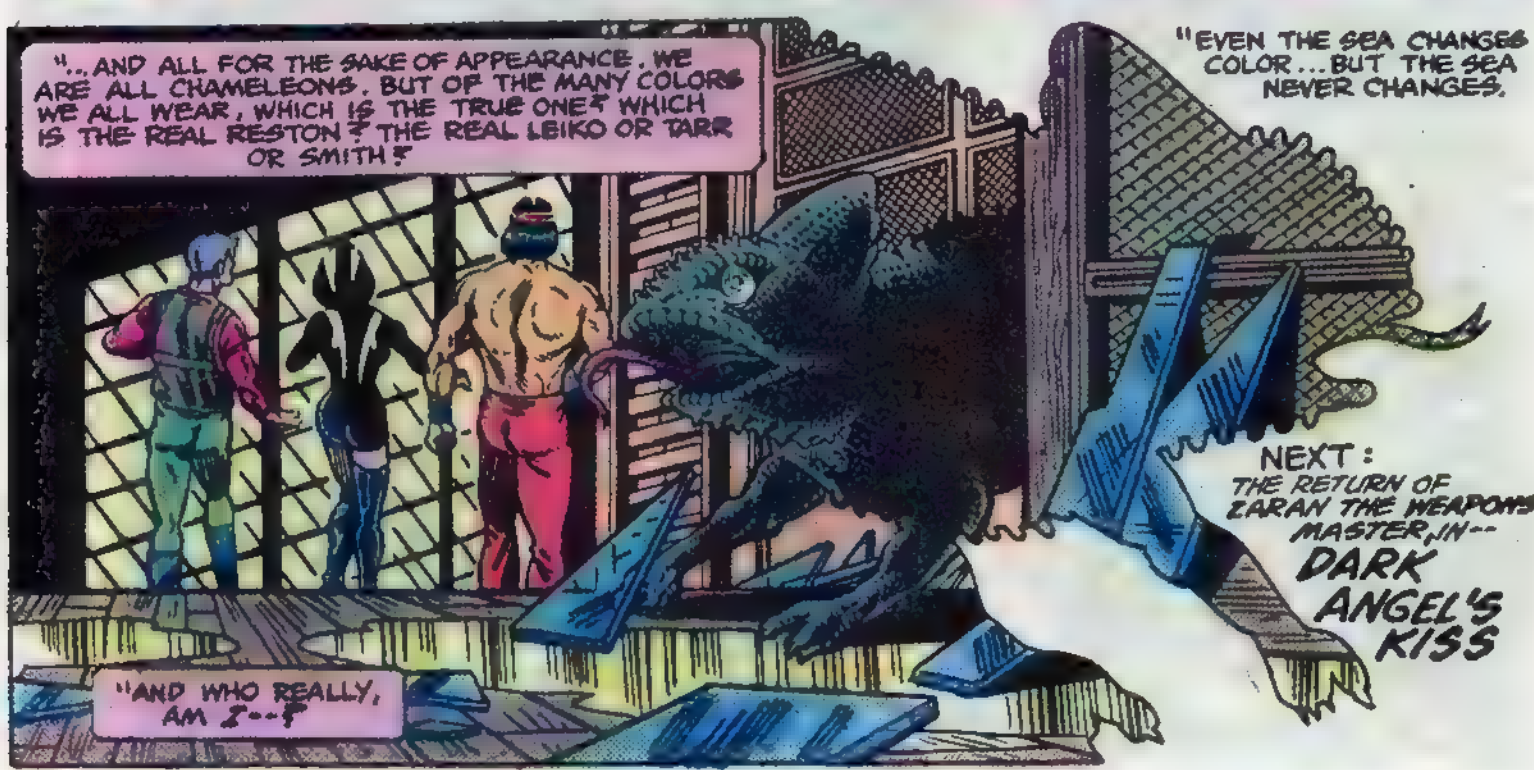


MY SWEET ANGEL! I KNOW YOU HADN'T TAKEN A FALL!

IF IT IS ROMANCE, YOU CRAVE, MR. RESTON, I AM ACCUSTOMED TO A MORE SUBTLE APPROACH.

YOU WILL HAVE TO ADJUST YOURSELF ACCORDINGLY.

"AND SO IT IS ALL A SHAM, EVEN THE DARK ANGEL'S FINAL PROTESTATIONS..."



"...AND ALL FOR THE SAKE OF APPEARANCE. WE ARE ALL CHAMELEONS. BUT OF THE MANY COLORS WE ALL WEAR, WHICH IS THE TRUE ONE? WHICH IS THE REAL RESTON? THE REAL LEIKO OR TARR OR SMITH?"

"EVEN THE SEA CHANGES COLOR...BUT THE SEA NEVER CHANGES."

NEXT:
THE RETURN OF ZARAN THE WEAPONS MASTER, IN--
DARK ANGEL'S KISS

"AND WHO REALLY, AM I--?"

BULLPEN BULLETINS

HELLO, AGAIN...

A few months ago, I proudly announced that by popular demand, the Bullpen Bulletins page was back — and it was, for two whole months. Then a small problem developed. Due to a tiny little miscalculation and a great big miscommunication, we suddenly discovered that we had sort of overcommitted our ad space for a few months. The result? No Bullpen Page until things were set right. Well, folks, finally we've got it all straightened out, this time for sure! I absolutely, unequivocally guarantee that there will be a Bullpen Bulletins page each and every issue from now on... so will the fans holding Roger Stern hostage please let him go, or at least remove the bamboo shoots from under his fingernails?

ONWARD!

Though this column will appear in print in October, it is about 1:30 A.M., August 19th as these words flow like mooseballs from my Eberhard Faber #2 onto this yellow legal pad. How, then, can this be late? Are we really working that far a head of our publishing date? Must be. They wouldn't make me stay up all night writing this if they didn't really need it. Probably today at 9 A.M. Would they? Hmm.

SECRETS BEHIND THE COMICS #147

I may be the only writer in comics who can't type at all (hence the legal pad and pencil). This sure takes a long time. Helpful hint to would-be writers and everybody else: Learn to type, even if you have to resort to the Doug Moench technique. Doug, who writes MASTER OF KUNG FU and MOON KNIGHT brilliantly uses one finger to type out his plots and scripts. It's hard that way, but if you want to develop one really strong finger...

COMICS CONVENTIONS R US!

Summer is convention time, and the Mighty Marvel Creative Crew turned out in force for Phil Seuling's July 4th New York Convention, the Chicago Con in mid-July and the biggest of them all, the San Diego Comic-Con at the end of July. At his "July Con," as it's commonly called, Phil Seuling hosted a splendid cocktail party for Comics Creators, as is his custom, during which a new record was established for the most lies told in one room. At the Chicago Con, between panel discussions, art auctions and on-stage interviews conducted with class and crisp professionalism by Con host Mike Gold, I found time to attend a nifty party at the home of the FANTASTIC FOUR's superstar artist/writer John Byrne and his beautiful wife Andrea (call her "Andy"), and also to co-host a bash with Archie Goodwin at Chicago's famous Lawry's restaurant, for thirty-two comics folk, including a bunch from the competition. Archie, as you undoubtedly know, is Editorial Director of EPIC ILLUSTRATED magazine, which you ought to go out and buy right now because it's great. (That's not a plug, that's good advice.) In sunny San Diego I met Allen Saunders, a legend in the syndicated strip business for his work on Mary Worth, Steve Roper, and other top strips, and got a chance to renew acquaintances with B. Kibben, of Cat fame, and Larry Niven, the author of Ringworld and other great works of science fiction. Most importantly, however, at each of the conventions, I got to talk to and listen to you folks. I learned a lot.

LIKE WHAT, CORNBALL?

Like how much people cared about the death of Phoenix back in X-MEN #137. At the time the story was published, several fans were actually moved to send flowers to the Marvel offices in honor of Phoenix. I was impressed then. Now, I'm deeply touched. It seems that our characters are as real to you as they are to us. Wow.

WHAT ELSE?

I learned that DAZZLER is the dark horse fan fave of 1981! That is to say, many fans seemed to be surprised that they like the book. I'm not. I'm surprised how much they like it. Most folks agreed that the concept of a beautiful, female character with no limit on her power is very intriguing, and that the battle-with-Galectus issue was the "convincer."

MORE...?

Sure. Later, though. Now, before I forget, I want to mention another Convention I'll be attending, the

Minneapolis Comics Convention, October 10 and 11 at the Hotel Leamington in Minneapolis (You thought maybe McKeesport?). For info, write:

MPLS Comic Conventions
Box 3221 Traffic Station
Minneapolis, MN 55403

I'll be mentioning other Cons from time to time as space permits. Give one a try, will ya. It's a blast.

LOOSE END DEPARTMENT:

In the last Bullpen Bulletin page published I promised that Editor Dennis J. O'Neil would explain why his friends call him "El Jefe Del Mundo" or "Hef" for short. And so...

O'NEIL'S ORANGEGRATE

Okay, I've got no choice. Jim Shooter promised an explanation of my title. No, not the title "editor" (of DAREDEVIL, MOON KNIGHT, POWER MAN & IRON FIST, MASTER OF KUNG FU, SPIDER-WOMAN and BIZARRE ADVENTURES... and no, we never do miss a chance for a plug). My other title. Since Shooter is huge enough to look menacing when he's doing nothing more scary than picking petunias — on weekends, he works as a shade tree — I'll comply. I was ambling down a lower Manhattan street on my way to a mugging contest when this little man darted out from a doorway... little guy whose last bath had been in the Red Sea the day Moses parted it, dressed in clothing the Salvation Army had probably rejected. I thought, another New York weirdo. He said, "Hey, main fraud. You jefe del mundo, you know? You chief of the world, capeesh?" Well, obviously, I had been mistaken. Here was a sage, a prophet, a messenger from a higher power. His words had the simplicity of profound truth. Then he said, "Hey, jefe, you got any spare change?" But I was already walking away, wondering how to convince the rest of you people...

ANOTHER LOOSE END:

There's a new face in the Bullpen, and an introduction is in order. I'm too tired to strike up the band, and so, without fanfare...

MIGHTY MARVEL'S NEWEST EDITOR...

...is Tom DeFalco, who'll be working on AMAZING SPIDER-MAN, SPECTACULAR SPIDER-MAN, MARVEL TALES, TEAM-UP, GHOST RIDER, and WHAT IF...?. Tom brings an impressive and varied background to the job, having edited for years at Archie Comics, and having written virtually every character in comics, from Fred Flintstone to the Mighty Thor. Shortly before being pressed into service as an editor, he put in a tour of duty as a Marvel mainstay writer, turning in outstanding work on the DAZZLER, MARVEL TWO-IN-ONE, and TEAM-UP. Tom's list of accomplishments and credits goes on and on, but the best thing I can say about him is that he's smart enough to be home in his bed fast asleep now.

OUT OF SPACE ALREADY?

Thank Odin! It's 3:45 A.M. Too late to go home. Might as well just curl up on the floor of the office here and try to catch a couple of hours sleep. I've got a busy day ahead, what with Bob Hall coming in to plot AVENGERS #219 with Editor Jim Salicrup and me. Let's see, that's the one where the Avengers finally catch up with Moondragon and... hmm. Mustn't spill the beans.

What a glamorous life! What a hard floor!

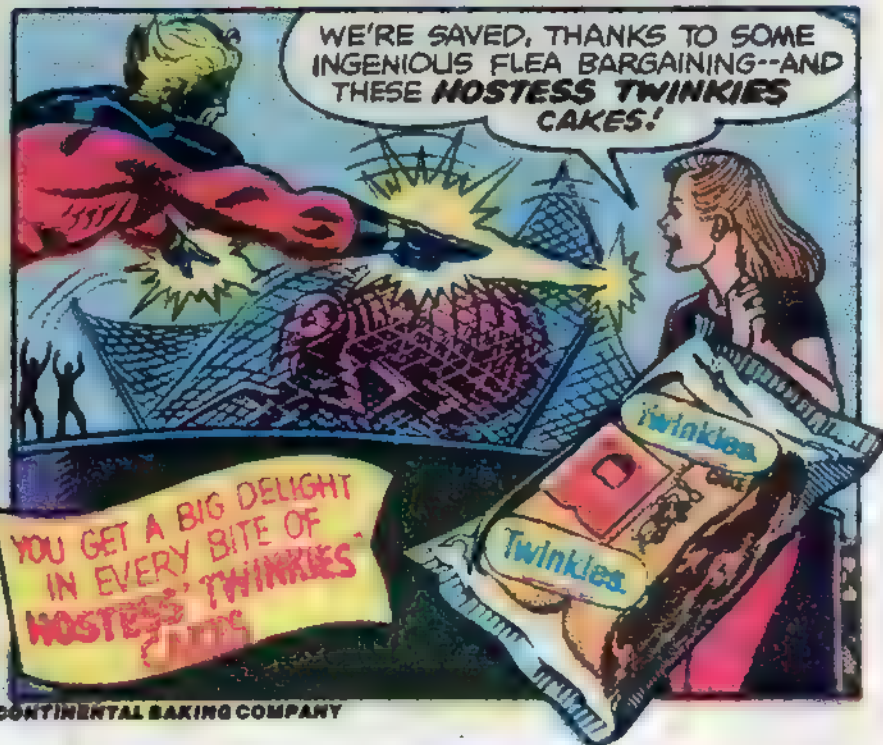
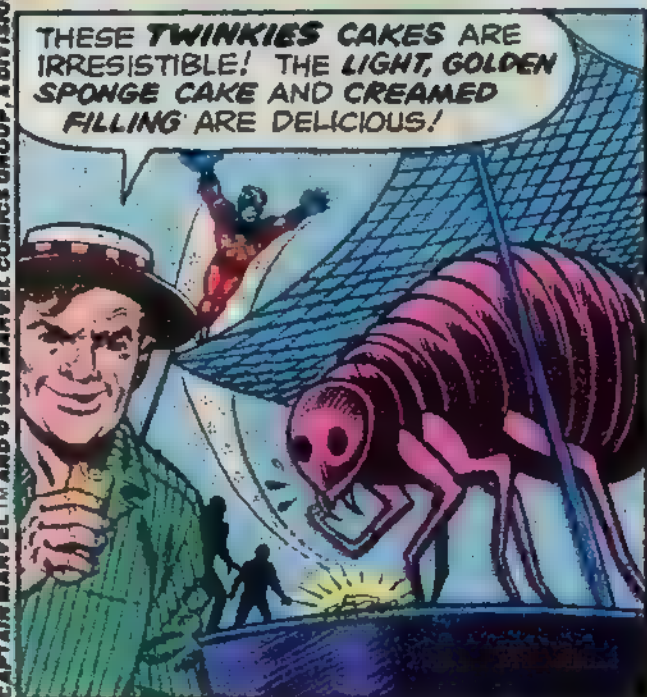
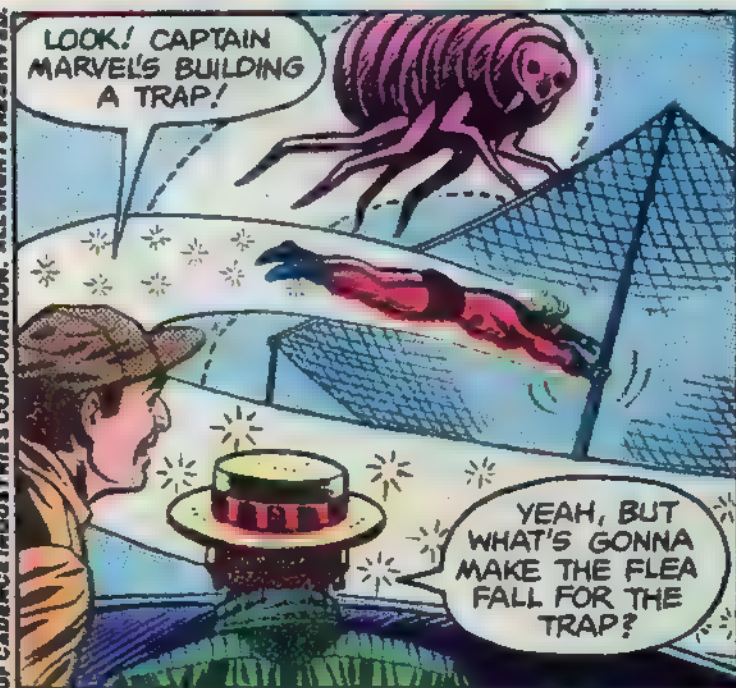
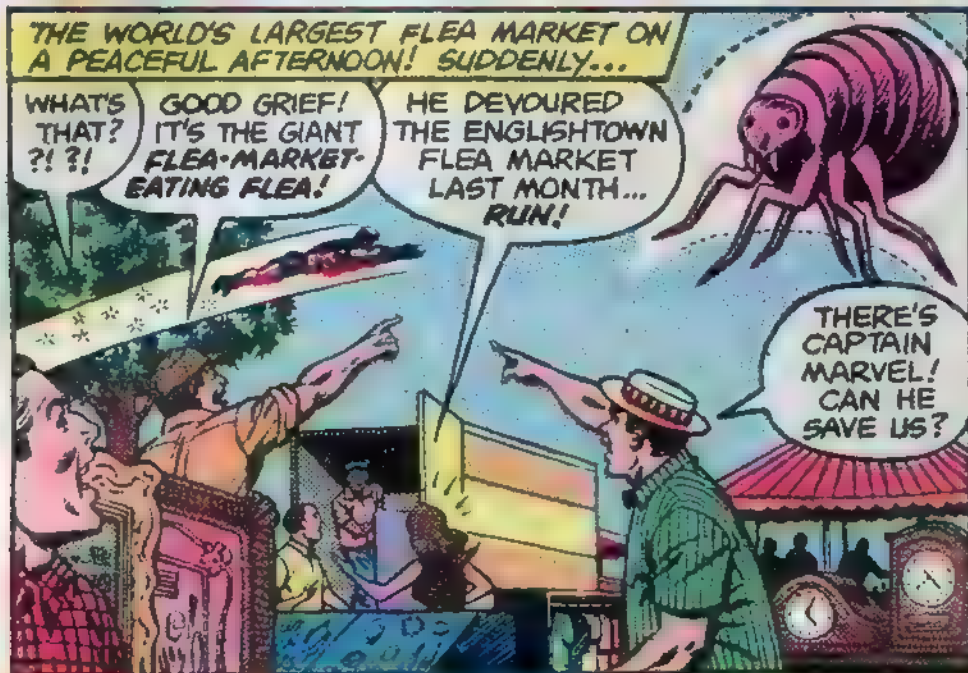
NEXT MONTH:

The least-requested feature of all time will appear on this page — an actual photo of me. Careful! If I hear any groans, I'll print two!

Shooter
SHOOTER



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DENNIS O'NEIL
EDITOR
RALPH MACCHIO
ASSISTANT EDITOR

Dear Doug and Mike:

I was deeply moved by MOKF #101, and would like to comment on it.

Shang-Chi is basically a nonviolent person, and I suppose pacifism is his ultimate ideal. However, the problem is that he does not occupy a closed environment; he is subject to the actions and vagaries of those around him. Because said actions often have a direct effect on his existence, he must continually choose between blind pacifism and altering his life's philosophy.

Such was the situation in #101. As much as Chi abhors violence, he is at least flexible and open-minded enough to realize that it is a preferable alternative to turning one's back on conscience and commitment, or to allowing even a former foe to come to harm.

And so, almost paradoxically, because he is willing to compromise his ethics toward a higher purpose, the spirit within him continues to rise and advance...

Kevin C. McConnell
118 Main Avenue
Warren, PA 16365

Every yin has its yang, Kevin, as Shang-Chi has repeatedly learned, alternately to his delight or dismay. That's life.

Dear Doug, Mike, and Gene,

MASTER OF KUNG FU #100 was one heck of a good read. That's what I like about your stories, Doug, no matter which book it is — WEREWOLF BY NIGHT, DOC SAVAGE, INHUMANS, MOON KNIGHT, or MOKF — the story is satisfying, much like a good novel or movie or, better yet, a three-course meal.

"Red of Fang and Claw, All Love Lost" took me back to the Sax Rohmer books, which I always enjoy despite or maybe because of their period flavor. Especially evocative was the first chapter, "The Immortal Caravan," as conveyed through the device of Nayland Smith's journal. (Is there any hope of seeing direct adaptations of the Fu Manchu books as was, I believe, originally planned? Maybe in BIZARRE ADVENTURES?)

The Jack the Ripper connection was particularly interesting, and the way you gradually resolved the years-long drama was totally absorbing.

I look forward to #115, the real 100th anniversary issue. Till next month, keep happy.

Dale L. Cole
41, Whitecross Road
Warrington
Cheshire, WA5 1LR
England

While anything is possible, our Cestrian friend, there are no current plans for adapting Rohmer's original novels. We will, however, be delving into that milieu from time to time in the future — and make that the near future...

(By the way, we couldn't resist flaunting a bit of newfound knowledge in our first sentence above. While attending a dinner party in Chicago the other night, Doug was speaking with a young woman from England whom he'd known for years, but was nevertheless nonplused when she referred to herself as a "stubborn Cestrian." Quite simply, she explained, a Cestrian is someone from Cheshire. Hope we got the spelling right, Dale.)

Dear Doug, Mike, and Gene,

He is a comics reader, has been since that muggy summer day in 1967 when he stepped into the only drugstore in a sleepy little tourist trap called Greenville, and exchanged twelve cents for a copy of DAREDEVIL #33. Since that time he's read thousands of comics, scores of titles. He has seen them come and he has seen them go.

For the longest time, MASTER OF KUNG FU was one of those he expected to go.

He gave the series a wide berth when it was first introduced. He liked Englehart and Starlin, but he was not too fired up about Fu Manchu. Besides, he told himself in a smugly superior way, the strip is obviously a carbon-copy of Carradine's Kung Fu TV series, just a calculating ploy to jump on the martial arts bandwagon and make some quick bucks. Darned thing probably won't even last a year.

Time passed. He weakened, finally buying MOKF #21. He got about what he expected: uninspired story, bland artwork. On the other hand, "Season of Vengeance" was the tail-end of a two-parter begun by a different writer; maybe the next issue or so wouldn't be so bad...

He hung in for another half-year. He bought the 50¢ GIANT-SIZE MOKF books and was intrigued by some of the things Moench and Gulacy were doing, but the regular series was just plodding

along from month to month. He was just about to bail out, figuring cancellation was just around the corner, when the "Next Issue" blurb in #28 made him change his mind. "Paul Gulacy rejoins Doug Moench," it said. "A dynamic new direction" — "slickly blistering action" — "dazzlingly glossy excitement!" He figured he'd hang around a while longer and see if the next issues could live up to all that hype.

They did — and more. By the time he finished the Velcro and Mordillo trilogies, he was in love with MOKF. In love with it, yes, though not convinced it would avoid cancellation. Are people going to buy this, he wondered. He'd seen books get "too good" before, and they usually ended up being cut down in their primes. Why should MOKF be any different?

Yet it was. There have been changes since the strip became "too good" — the proliferation of fill-ins after Paul left, the very quiet phasing out of Jim Craig and the very quiet phasing in of Mike Zeck — and as each of those changes occurred he has wondered: Is this it? Is this going to knock the series off its pinnacle of quality and start it on the downhill slide? But each time his fears have been groundless: he still goes around calling MOKF "the best comic on the stands" and gets precious little argument over the point, just the way it was when Doug and Paul were getting things into high gear.

Now he looks at MASTER OF KUNG FU #100 and he can't help but smile "Special Double-Sized 100th Anniversary Issue!" A shiny, sparkling gem of a tale, not only featuring the work of soon-to-be-ex-Chi-artist Mike Zeck but also throwing a sixteen-page spotlight on soon-to-be-new-Chi-artist Gene Day.

MOKF #100. Not bad for a strip that was obviously a TV ripoff, he thinks. Not bad for "the best comic on the stands" either.

MOKF was never "too good"; since #29 it's been just good enough. The comics reader who got started so long ago with DAREDEVIL #33 hopes you can keep it up for another hundred issues.

He'll be with you for each and every one.

Bruce Canwell
Rural Route #2, Box 214
Bowdoin, ME 04008

NEXT ISSUE: The mystery of the Dark Angel deepens in a most unexpected way. Plus — the return of one of the deadliest KUNG FU villains: Zaran the Weapons Master! Be here in thirty!

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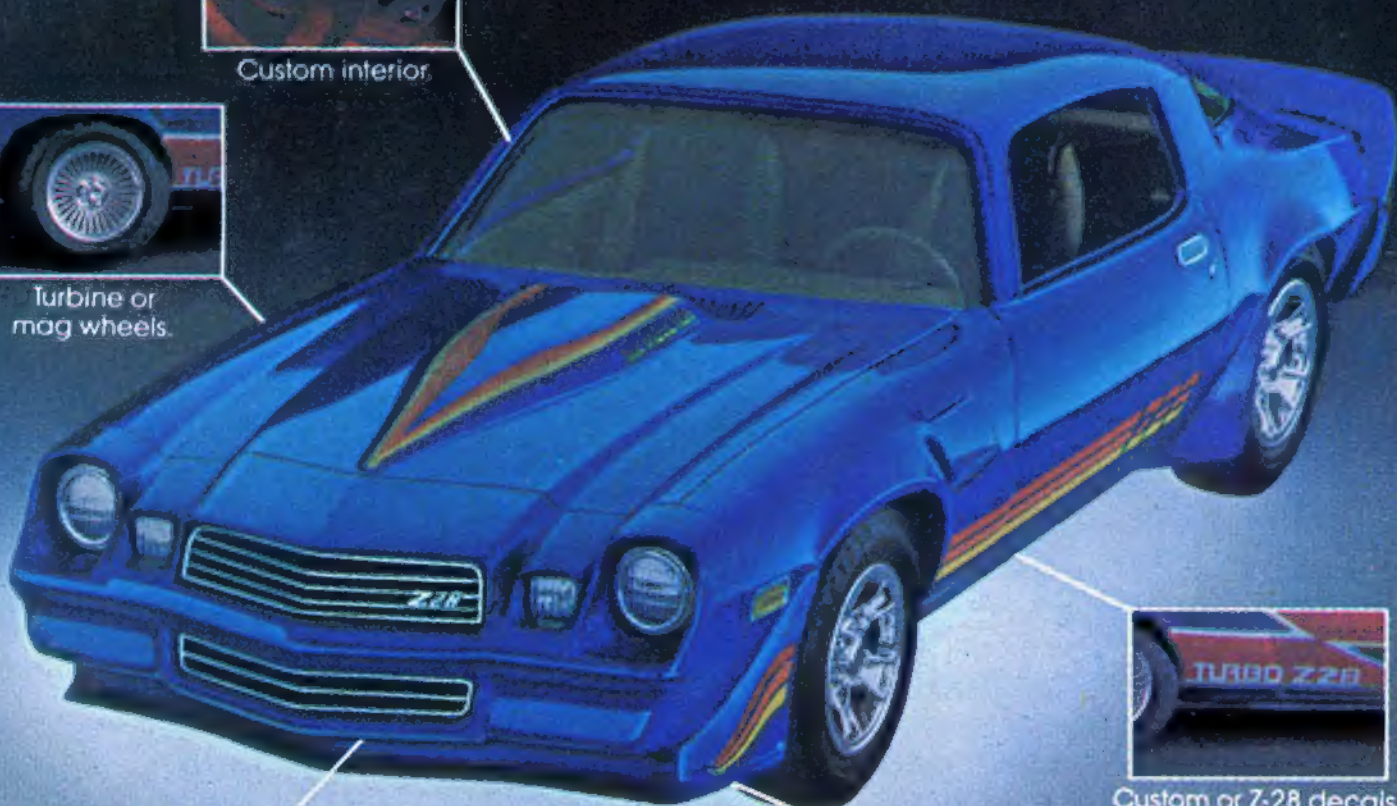
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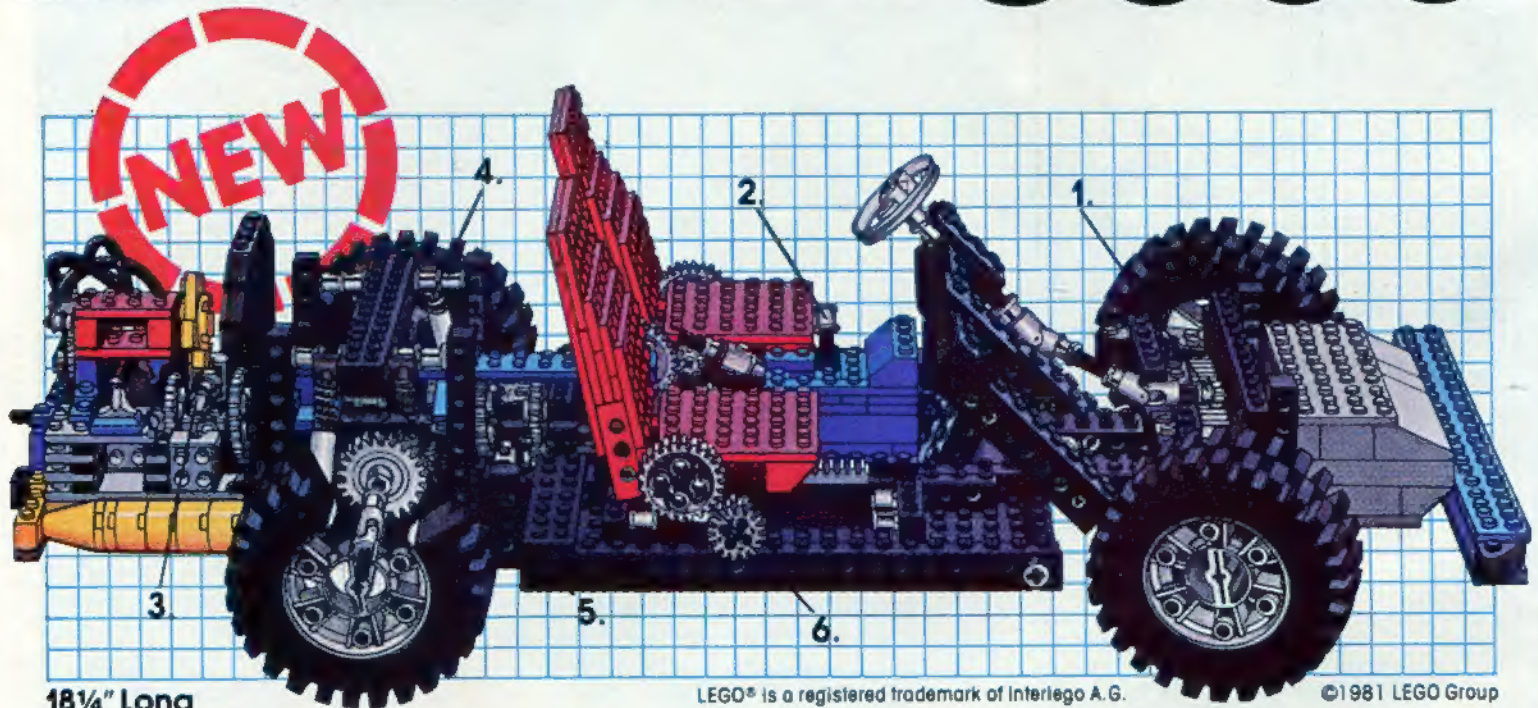


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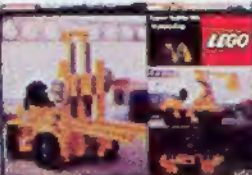
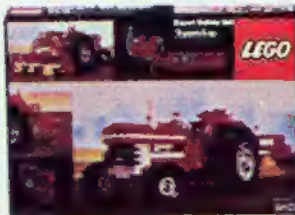
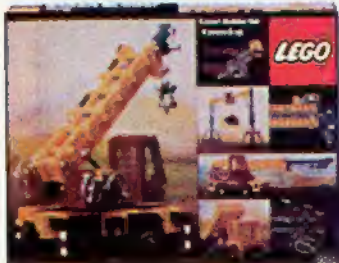


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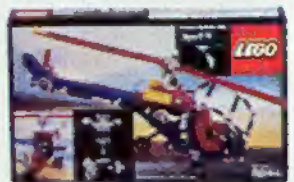
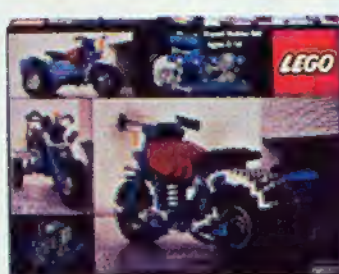
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